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ABSTRACT

In a survey conducted in early 1972, the presidents of the colleges and universities represented on the Higher Education Panel were asked to list the five publications they found to be most helpful in carrying out their responsibilities. The results are presented in tabular form, reporting the five publications most widely suggested, and also categorizing responses by universities (public and private), four-year institutions (public and private), two-year institutions, and predominantly black institutions. The "Chronicle of Higher Education" was by far the most frequently reported item, and among other publications were a number that do not deal directly with higher education. (MSE)

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What College Presidents Are Reading

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During the middle of December 1971, the Management Division of the Academy for Educational Development, Inc., a member of the American Council on Education, requested that the Higher Education Panel conduct a survey for them. Specifically, they wanted to know what college and university presidents are reading to keep abreast of developments in higher education and of techniques of university administration. This information was needed to assist the Academy in planning their various programs for college administrators. They proposed to distribute the findings of the survey both to the institutions that participated in the survey and to the institutions on their own mailing list. Moreover, they proposed, if financial and other considerations allowed, to distribute the single publication named by institutional presidents as most useful to all four-year college presidents.

On January 31, all 521 representatives of the member institutions of the Higher Education Panel were mailed a survey form asking that the representatives forward the form to their presidents for completion. Each president was asked to list the five publications (books, periodicals, pamphlets, reports, and articles) which he found to be most helpful in carrying out the responsibilities of his position.

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Presidents were not asked to list the five items in any order of priority, nor were they to assume that their listing would constitute an endorsement but merely an indication that they had found certain publications valuable.

Generally, responses to the survey were favorable and useful; some, however, were negative. A few presidents felt the survey to be trivial and said that there were more important questions to be asked about higher education and that this survey merely added to the already heavy weight of questionnaires inundating the administrative offices of the institutions. Such comments may explain why the general response rate was low (49 percent) in comparison with those of other HEP surveys, which generally had return rates of better than 90 percent. Out of 521 institutions surveyed, 257 institutions returned the form. Of these 257 returns, 15 were unusable leaving 242 (94 percent) returns with data that could be used.

The results of the survey are shown as follows. Table 1 reports the five documents most widely read by the presidents of all institutions, and the remaining four report the returns by various types of institutions categorized as (1) universities (public and private); (2) four-year institutions (public and private); (3) two-year institutions (public and private); and (4) predominantly black institutions.

As Table 1 indicates, the most widely read publications of all those that cross presidents' desks have a general orientation to higher education affairs. The Chronicle of

Higher Education (a weekly publication comprising not only news items but also feature articles) was by far the most frequently reported item, having a readership of more than double that of the next most frequently read item.

As Table 2 shows, among the presidents of both public and private universities, The Chronicle was again the most popular. Several new items were included, one of them being Alvin Toffler's Future Shock, which deals only indirectly with higher education.

The Chronicle once again heads the list of publications which presidents of four-year colleges found to be most helpful (Table 3), while the remaining publications were essentially the same as those listed by presidents of universities.

As would be expected of a more specialized institution, presidents of two-year institutions found that the Junior College Journal was about as helpful to them as The Chronicle (Table 4).

The Chronicle was the publication most often read by presidents of predominantly black institutions, although a close second was the New York Times (Table 5).

These publications were not, of course, the only ones listed by the college presidents but the most frequently reported. A number of the administrators listed magazines and novels that did not pertain to the problems surrounding higher education (for instance, The Human Zoo by Desmond Morris; Homer's Odyssey; Civilization by Kenneth Clark;

Eleanor and Franklin by Joseph Lash; Don Quixote by Cervantes; and Wind, Sand and Stars by Antoine St. Exupery), but they included these with the note that they welcomed them as useful diversions from the duties of the office.

For the sake of both brevity and relevance, we decided to limit the report to the top five documents reported by the presidents. Should anyone be interested in a more comprehensive listing, however, there is one on file in the Higher Education Panel office with the 42 most widely read and helpful publications.

Table 1

Most Widely Read Documents at
All Institutions
(N = 242)

1. Chronicle of Higher Education [141]
2. Higher Education and National Affairs [57]
3. The Reports of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education [46]
4. Liberal Education [37]
5. Educational Record [13]

The numbers in parentheses in the body of the table indicate the number of presidents who listed the publication as helpful.

Table 2

Most Widely Read Documents at Universities
(N = 33)

PUBLIC (N=13)	PRIVATE (N=20)
1. Chronicle of Higher Education [10]	1. Chronicle of Higher Education [9]
2. Educational Record [6]	2. Higher Education and National Affairs [7]
3. College and University Business [4]	3. The Reports of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education [7]
4. Higher Education and National Affairs [4]	4. The Newman Report [4]
5. NASULGC Newsletter [4]	5. Future Shock, by Alvin Toffler [2]

The numbers in parentheses in the body of the table indicate the number of presidents who listed the publication as helpful.

Table 3

Most Widely Read Documents at
Four-Year Institutions
(N = 162)

PUBLIC (N=25)	PRIVATE (N=137)
1. Chronicle of Higher Education [13]	1. Chronicle of Higher Education [84]
2. The Newman Report [5]	2. Higher Education and National Affairs [36]
3. Higher Education and National Affairs [4]	3. Liberal Education [35]
4. Statewide Coordination of Higher Education, by Robert O. Berdahl [4]	4. The Reports of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education [30]
5. The Reports of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education [3]	5. Shaping American Higher Education, by Logan Wilson [27]

The numbers in parentheses in the body of the table indicate the number of presidents who listed the publication as helpful.

Table 4

Most Widely Read Documents at
Two-Year Institutions
(N = 42)

	PUBLIC (N=27)		PRIVATE (N=15)
1.	Junior College Journal [12]	1.	Chronicle of Higher Education [9]
2.	Chronicle of Higher Education [11]	2.	Junior College Journal [7]
3.	The Reports of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education [6]	3.	Higher Education and National Affairs [6]
4.	Educational Record [5]	4.	College and University Business [2]
5.	Future Shock, by Alvin Toffler [5]	5.	Shaping American Higher Education, by Logan Wilson [2]

The numbers in parentheses in the body of the table indicate the number of presidents who listed the publication as helpful.

Table 5

Most Widely Read Documents at
Predominantly Black Institutions
(N = 5)

1. Chronicle of Higher Education [5]
2. New York Times [3]
3. The Invisible Colleges, by Alexander W. Astin and Calvin B.T. Lee [3]
4. Educational Record [2]
5. Liberal Education [2]

The numbers in parentheses in the body of the table indicate the number of presidents who listed the publication as helpful.

Figure 1

Survey Questionnaire

Higher Education Panel

Survey No. 6

What College Presidents Are Reading

What five documents (books, pamphlets, reports, articles) that you read during 1971 did you find most helpful in carrying out your responsibilities as a college president?

1. Name: _____
   Citation: _____
2. Name: _____
   Citation: _____
3. Name: _____
   Citation: _____
4. Name: _____
   Citation: _____
5. Name: _____
   Citation: _____

_____
President's Signature